

1962

Federal Advisory Council to the Arts, United States Arts Foundation: Hearings (August 1962): Speech 04

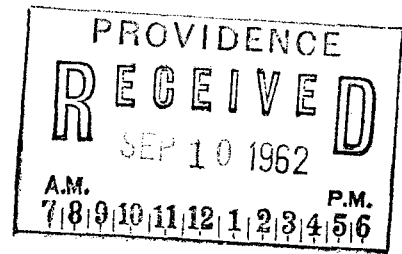
George V. Clancy

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_38

Recommended Citation

Clancy, George V., "Federal Advisory Council to the Arts, United States Arts Foundation: Hearings (August 1962): Speech 04" (1962). *Federal Advisory Council to the Arts, United States Arts Foundation: Hearings (August 1962)*. Paper 6.
http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_38/6http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_38/6

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Education: National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Subject Files II (1962-1996) at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Federal Advisory Council to the Arts, United States Arts Foundation: Hearings (August 1962) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu.



TEXT OF ORAL STATEMENT

BY

GEORGE V. CLANCY

International Treasurer, American Federation of Musicians, AFL-CIO

Before The

SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE ARTS

Of The

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE

Washington, D.C.
August 31, 1962

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE
ON THE ARTS;

My name is George V. Clancy. I am the elected International Treasurer of the American Federation of Musicians, with offices at 220 Mt. Pleasant Avenue, Newark, New Jersey.

Appearing here today as proxy for our International President, Mr. Herman Kenin, I speak for some 268,000 professional instrumentalists. I do not designate my 268,000 colleagues as "working musicians" because dwindling employment opportunities deny more than half of them the privilege of earning their principal livelihood in their chosen profession. Yet each and every one of them is a dedicated musician, concerned not only about his or her professional future but about the sad estate of music and the other cultural arts in this country.

Let me say first that we musicians are cheered by the significance of this very hearing. Little did we hope that an exceedingly busy Senate, confronting a priority work program in its drive toward adjournment, would pause even briefly to consider the merits of three so-called "arts" bills. We could wish that a comparable will and desire to serve the human values concerned here were equally evident on the other side of the Capitol.

The American Federation of Musicians endorses enthusiastically the main thrust of all of the legislation under consideration here, namely: S. 741, a proposal to establish a

Federal Advisory Council to the Arts, introduced by Senator Humphrey and a distinguished list of co-sponsors from both sides of the Senate; also S. 785, proposing grants to states in support of the arts, introduced by Senator Clark, for himself, and on behalf of Senators Pell and Humphrey; and S. 1250, proposing a United States Arts Foundation, sponsored by the distinguished Senior Senator from New York, Mr. Javits.

These are all enlightened, significant, worthy proposals and we are happy to see them sponsored on both sides of the Capitol, and in bipartisan fashion, by legislators who are leading thinkers and doers in the Congress. We musicians would like to see all three of these bills enacted into law, but if we had to settle for one instead of three--and thus far we have had to settle for none at all--we would commend particularly to this Committee S. 741, the Federal Arts Council proposal, as perhaps the best starting platform for any structure of governmental recognition and assistance to music and the performing arts that might be evolved in the next decade.

If we musicians were pessimists we, along with our music, would long since have succumbed to the frustrations of attempting to win the Congress, and especially the House of Representatives, to the simple concept that government has an obligation and a responsibility to conserve the human resources of our artistic and cultural heritage just as it must conserve the nation's natural

resources. But we are realists, and while we admire the bold strokes of the Javits and Clark bills which would put the Federal Government into the immediate business of making grants in support of the arts, we wonder if the country--and especially the Congress of the United States and more particularly the House of Representatives--is ready for that so necessary but yet so advanced a governmental posture.

Too many Americans have been too long a time, Mr. Chairman, in coming to any small recognition that government has a duty to perform in promoting the national culture as expressed in the performing arts. That concept, so well established in the Old World hundreds of years ago, still is not acceptable to all Americans. Yet, there is an awakening in this country. There are unmistakeable stirrings, and it is not strange that this should be so. Some 30 millions of us, approximately one out of every six Americans, play musical instruments; there exist--precariously and, for the most part, always on the edge of bankruptcy--some 1500 serious musical organizations that may be called symphony orchestras. We have some 750 organizations that produce opera and there are well over 100,000 theatrical groups engaged in seasonal and occasional production, amateur and professional. Seventy-three of our cities already have built or are in process of building their own cultural centers and more and more states are quite proudly subsidizing with tax monies their worthy,

established performing arts institutions through the medium of State Arts Councils.

I don't mean by this partial roll call of community activity in the arts to be predicting that the golden age of the arts in America is upon us. It isn't. We have much to learn; we have many of our fellows to educate; we have to put government into this arts business simply because it is not a business. It is not-- and never can be--a commercial venture capable of sustaining itself any more than are our public school systems, our libraries and our museums.

No, the golden age of American arts and culture is not yet discernable on the far horizon. In fact, the only tangible gain-- and the importance of this gain no one will deprecate--has been the public awakening I've just attempted to describe.

In fact, today, almost a year after putting into the record of this Congress, in hearings before the Select Subcommittee of the House Education and Labor Committee, a rather dour prognosis on the future of serious music in America, we find no reason to soften our words.

My associate, President Kenin, testifying before the House Subcommittee considering the Arts Advisory Council proposal, on November 15, 1961, said (and I quote):

"It is the considered opinion of the American Federation of Musicians that serious music cannot survive much longer in the United States without assistance from Government."

Today, a year later and with a good many thousands of words added to that Congressional report on the anemic condition of the performing arts, we musicians see no justification for softening that unhappy forecast.

In short, we say to this Committee and to the Congress that time is running out. There already exists in America a shortage of skilled string players capable of filling symphony orchestra chairs. The Federation of Musicians gives graduate instruction every summer to 100 of the finest young talents in this musical field, but we cannot, in all honesty, comfort these hard-working, completely deserving young people with any assurance of a bread-and-butter career in music. True, they can all get seasonal jobs in symphony orchestras because demand exceeds supply, but very few of them can hope for employment tenures of more than 20 weeks out of a year or monetary rewards in excess of \$3,000 per annum. Those figures fall far short of a professional livelihood and, needless to say, offer no incentive to the propagation of new instrumental talents.

Our American pool of career musicians is fast drying up. The trend will continue so long as the economics of the profession are so bitterly unrewarding.

How do we halt this blight? There is, we fear, no single magic cure-all. There are several things that should be done, and most of these assists are the prerogatives of the Congress. Whether they

be in the area of excise tax relief, grants-in-aid, outright subsidies to insure that the civilizing influence of the performing arts shall be year around and nation-wide, or in new copyright protections and rewards for performers whose talents are now exploited through mechanical reproduction--all these and many other approaches must be inspected and dealt with by legislative reforms. It all adds up, Mr. Chairman, to federal assistance to the performing arts and that must, of course, stem from government's recognition of its very certain obligation to conserve these talented human resources and thus insure a high level of artistic culture.

The what-to-do and how-to-do-it, Mr. Chairman, will develop, we believe, only after a painstaking fact-finding--and perhaps some experimentation. That would be, as we understand the proposed legislation, the prime function of a Federal Advisory Council on the Arts. The Council should write the formulas and establish the definitions of grants-in-aid, such as are proposed by the two other bills under consideration by this Subcommittee.

You will have gathered from my testimony that the musicians favor governmental subsidies for music and the arts. That is correct. But we are not advocating now a substantial give-away or crash program. We predict that a forthright demonstration that official Washington does care about the arts will be as important as the dollars it disburses. And we doubt that a single penny of federal tax monies should be invested in this rescue operation until

a Congressionally-approved and Presidentially-directed plan for administering to the arts is established.

Therefore, I return to my recommendation that in our opinion the Federal Arts Council proposal is the most needed piece of legislation at the beginning of this salvage operation. We think the legislation pending here and as represented in the House by H.R. 4172, would be materially improved if it were amended so as to establish the Arts Council as a function of the Cultural Affairs office of the White House rather than to house it in the Department of Health Education and Welfare. We suggest to you and to the sponsors of this legislation that needed for this complex study will be the best minds and skills possible to bring to the public service. These persons can best be recruited and put to work if they are responsible and responsive to the Chief Executive. The departmental mazes of Washington will prove less attractive, we fear, to the type of men and women needed to shape a starting program for a renaissance of the arts in America.

I say to you again, Mr. Chairman, that there is a timetable and that time is running out, even as talents are being starved out. We are told we are but a few months or a year or so behind in the race to the moon. In the cold war contest to win friends and influence people on this planet--a contest in which we have utilized our artistic talents to greater effect than our more abundant dollars--we are generations behind most other civilized nations in

providing continuing and effective sustenance to our arts and artists. The moral is plain, Mr. Chairman. The timetable is all too apparent. The compulsion to win this race, or at least to compete on even terms, seems inescapable.

We of the Federation of Musicians thank you for giving us this opportunity to contribute to the record of these hearings and we hope you will ask the Senate to adopt the worthy proposals now before you, and particularly to speed the creation of a Federal Advisory Council of the Arts, making it responsible to the President of the United States whose favorable recommendation on this particular legislation already has been made known to the Congress.

Thank you for your attention and your courtesy,

#####